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New-York, with one borrowed five-franc piece in his pocket. Thus he began life, a stranger upon strange soil. By advice he was induced to leave New-York for Newark, N. J., and in that city engaged as teacher in several institutes. This did not long suit him; he painted portraits, but threw this off also for branches offering more liberty and exercise of imagination. A number of animal pieces made their appearance, for which he used his European studies, and the American Art-Union was his principal purchaser. Thus passed three years.

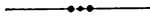
About that time he married with an American lady, and, recovering the confidence which adverse circumstances and utter want of sympathy among strangers had impaired, he again concentrated his mind upon Scriptural subjects. Yet he was not master of color and effect. He knew it, and left his works as drawings in pencil only. "The Death of Saul," and a larger cartoon, "Redemption," belong to this period. The latter composition was never exhibited. It contains but five figures, most diverse and opposite in character, and illustrates, as the name implies, the redemption of the human soul by Christ, from Satan, Sin, and Death.

An idealistic disposition, love of retirement, ignorance of the world, and want of business talent, combined to keep the artist obscure and poor, and compelled him to work, not only distasteful to himself in a high degree, but also little calculated to advance his knowledge or his executive faculties. Yet he never lost sight of his aim; and, while most of the day had to be spent in laboring for a mere support, a few days occasionally, and the nights, were conscientiously appropriated to study, to keep, as he expressed it, "his soul alive." Thus, while he drew on wood, engraved on steel, or made small designs for engravings, for a living, he accumulated many thoughts and compositions, and some oil paintings, a small part of which only have come before the public. Of these, in oil, we may name: "The Country Connoisseurs," "The Captive Soul," and "Prairie Horses pursued by Indians." Of elaborate designs in pencil or crayon: "The Four Seasons" (a moral series), "The Four Greater Prophets," "The Warrior-Bard," and "Christ adored by Heaven and Earth."


In the spring of 1857, he was desired by the then superintendent of the Cap-

itol extension, Capt. M. C. Meigs, to visit Washington, and to assist in the decoration of the Capitol. Terms being arranged to his satisfaction, he left New-York City with high purposes to perform something worthy of the country of his adoption, and of the grand pile his work was to decorate. He was doomed to disappointment. After revising the various State-arms for the ceiling of the House of Representatives, but without painting one inch of the frescoes he was called and had contracted to execute, he resigned his position with indignation at the management of Art-matters at the Capitol, and removed again to the neighborhood of New-York. From that time he devoted himself chiefly to the study of animal-painting, the material for which lay all around him. Numerous smaller works were the result of his industry, and one of larger dimensions, called "Rich and Poor," attempts a moral as well as a story. While he is thus pursuing a branch of art that insures a more extended patronage, he does not neglect the principal study of his life, in which his heart and faculties are most deeply interested, that is, historic and religious painting. Works of this description always engage his spare time: "St. Paul in Prison," "Esau Returning from the Chase," "The Four Prophets," in oil, and "The Walk to Emmaus," are recent productions of his pencil and brush. The latter was exhibited at the National Academy of Design this season.

Mr. Oertel has, as will be seen, executed much for a man of his years; yet his promise is, as it were, that of one who had but half betrayed his strength. The world of American art has much to expect from his hands; and we hazard the prediction that it will not expect in vain.

 The letters of Alexander von Humboldt have been, from the bookseller's point of view, a great success. Five editions of the German original have been exhausted within two months. English translations of it have appeared both in England and here. As might be expected, the success of the book has called forth a number of similar publications. One of these, entitled "Memoirs of A. von Humboldt," raised, by its title, great expectations; but is merely a compilation of matters already known, and possessing but little value.

MOSAICS.

O we doubt that pictures and decorations, of a very graceful kind, depend upon little bits? Have we heard nothing about mosaics, and inlayings, and buhl, and marquetry, and parquetry, and niello, and pietre dure, and tessellated pavements, and encaustic tiles? All these are but so many applications of little bits—bits of enamel, bits of glass, bits of gems, bits of stone, bits of marble, bits of metal, bits of wood, bits of cement, bits of clay. Marked developments of skill and patience are connected with the working up of these little bits; and all the world knows that productions of great beauty result. Enamel, pebbles, marble, and clay, irrespective of metal and wood, form a very pretty family of little bits, as a brief glance will easily show us.

The little bits of enamel which constitute mosaic are the subjects of a most minute and tiresome routine of processes—perhaps more than the products are worth. A true mosaic picture consists of an infinity of little bits of enamel, disposed according to their colors, and imbedded in a frame-work prepared for their reception. Enamel is nothing more than opaque glass, the colors being given by the admixture of various metallic oxides. The number of varieties is quite enormous; for, in order to produce all the hues of a picture, there must not only be every color, but many shades or tints of each. The Pope himself is a mosaic manufacturer. He keeps up an establishment near St. Peter's; and at this establishment there are, it is asserted, no fewer than seventeen thousand tints of enamel, all arranged and labelled, in boxes and drawers, whence they are selected as the compositor would select his type. The enamel is cast into slabs; and each slab, by means of hammers, saws, files, lapidary-wheels, and other mechanical aids, is cut into tiny bits; or else the enamel, while hot and plastic from the furnace, is drawn out into threads or small sticks; for some of the bits for a small picture are as thin as sewing-thread. A back or groundwork for the picture is prepared, in marble, slate, or copper; it is hollowed out to a depth varying from a sixteenth of an inch to an inch, according to the size of the picture. The cavity is filled up with plaster of Paris; and the artist draws

his design with great care on the plaster. When the ground and the enamels are ready, the mosaicist begins. He digs out a very small portion of the plaster, in accordance with particular lines in the design, and fills up this cavity with a kind of putty or soft mastic, into which the little bits of enamel are pressed one by one. Thus, hour by hour, week by week, and even year by year, the artist proceeds; guided by the design on the plaster in scooping out each little portion; and guided by the original picture or sketch in selecting the colors of the enamels. When the picture is finished, it is ground perfectly level with emery; and any minute defects or interstices are filled with a mixture of wax and ground enamel.

The works produced in this enamel-mosaic are in some cases really wonderful. When Napoleon was lord of the destinies of Italy, he ordered a mosaic copy of Leonardo da Vinci's celebrated picture of the Last Supper, the same size as the original, twenty-four feet by twelve. Ten mosaicists were employed for eight years on this work, at a cost of more than seven thousand pounds. The Emperor of Austria, we believe, now possesses this extraordinary production. The face, in a portrait of Pope Paul the Fifth, is said to consist of more than a million-and-a-half of bits, each no larger than a millet-seed. There was exhibited in London, in eighteen hundred and fifty-one, a mosaic table-top, containing a series of beautiful views in Italy. Perhaps the most wonderful specimens ever produced were two which had no back or groundwork whatever, presenting a mosaic picture on each surface. They were formed of colored enamel fibres fitted side by side, and fused together into a solid mass. One specimen was an ornamental device; the other was a representation of a duck; and both exhibited great delicacy of outlines and tints by the occasional employment of transparent colored glass intermixed among the opaque colored enamels. So minutely were the details worked out, that the eye of the duck, and the feathers on the breast and wings, were imitated almost as exactly as could have been done by a miniature painter. It was in consequence of the mode in which these singular mosaics were produced, that the picture on one surface was a reverse of that on the other: the duck's head being to the

right in the one, and to the left in the other.

True mosaic pictures are not common in this country, being very expensive productions. In an artistic point of view, too, there is a limit to the excellence; for there must necessarily be a certain hardness of outline, unless the bits be almost infinitely small and almost infinitely varied in color. If a mosaic be examined, all the separate bits will be readily seen, joined by lines more or less visible, according as the work is coarsely or finely executed. Like a young lady's Berlin pattern, the little squares are of many colors, but each square is of one definite uniform color; indeed, we do not see why Berlin work should not be honored with the name of mosaic.

The theory of little bits is as susceptible of practical application with humble glass as with imperial enamel. There is a substance known as Keene's cement, which becomes as hard as marble, and receives a polish very little inferior to it. An ingenious artist has contrived so to combine little bits of colored glass as to form a mosaic adornment to articles fabricated in this cement; the white polish of the cement and the colored brilliancy of the glass contrasting well with each other. Productions of a very fanciful kind have in this way been sent forth; one consists of a pair of twisted columns upon pedestals, six or seven feet high, and intended to hold lamps or vases; the columns themselves are made of the cement, and the glass mosaic is introduced around the spiral shaft of the column in bands of different patterns; while the pedestal exhibits the mosaic in a geometrical rather than an ornate style. The bits of glass are imbedded in the cement while wet, and the whiteness of the cement assists in rendering apparent the colors of the mosaic. It is evident that, if once this art should tickle the fancy and open the purse-strings of his majesty, the public, an infinite variety of applications would be forthcoming—to walls, table-tops, chimney-pieces, pilasters, and so forth. It must be admitted, however, that this sort of mosaic is a very humble competitor to that in enamel; it is upholsterer's mosaic instead of artist's mosaic.

There is an elegant kind of mosaic or inlaying practised by the Italians, and called by them *pietra dura*, or hard stone. It consists of little bits of pebble im-

bedded in a slab of marble. The stone is really hard, for it comprises such varieties as quartz, agate, jasper, chalcedony, jade, cornelian, and lapis lazuli; and the formation of these into a regular pattern calls for the exercise of much patience and ingenuity. The artist first takes a slab of black marble, level in surface, and very little exceeding an eighth of an inch in thickness; he draws upon this the outline of his design; he patiently cuts away the requisite portions, by means of files and saws; and he has thus prepared the ground-work on which his labors are to be afterward bestowed. He then attends to the *pietra dura*, the gems, the little bits; every piece is, by lapidaries' tools, cut to the exact size and form necessary to fit it for the little vacuity which it is to occupy; and all are thus adjusted until the mosaic pattern is completed. The thin, fragile tablet thus prepared would never bear the wear and tear of active service unless further strengthened; it is on this account applied as a veneer to a thicker slab of marble or other stone. This is an extremely difficult art to accomplish with any degree of success; for in the imitation of natural objects, or in anything beyond a mere geometrical design, it is necessary to exercise great judgment in selecting the colors of the stones, and in fashioning each to a particular shape. The Florentine artists are especially skilled in this elegant art; they generally use pebbles picked up on the banks of the Arno. The Russians also show a fondness for these productions, which they vary by applying the small pebbles in relief on the surface of a slab; but this is not properly mosaic—it is a sort of stone-modelling in relieve, or it may deserve the name of cameo-mosaic, which has been given it. The jaspers and other pebbles, found abundantly in Siberia, enable the Russians to imitate various kinds of fruits with surprising correctness, in this cameo-mosaic. But the Hindoos excel both Florentines and Russians in *pietra dura* work; their designs are more elegant, and their workmanship more minute and delicate.

If a variegated marble pavement be called mosaic—which may be done by applying the theory of little bits to big bits—then we have many mosaics in England. But even here the Italians beat us hollow; for that is a land in which marble seems especially at home.

The pavement of our own St. Paul's Cathedral shows how rich a design may be worked out by this application of marble. The artist, of course, sketches his design originally on paper; and by giving to each piece of white, or gray, or black marble, the size corresponding with the proper ratio, the design becomes developed on the whole area of the pavement.

But there are other applications of marble, approaching a little more nearly to the character of mosaics. As the pattern is made smaller, so can the details be made more delicate, more pictorial, more approaching to a work of art. Indeed, every one can see at a glance, that as stone can be cut into very little bits, so can these bits be combined in ornate or mosaic forms. Derbyshire is a redoubtable workshop for such productions, on account of the numberless varieties of stone, marble, and spar, which it possesses; most of them very readily cut. Devonshire is another of our counties in which this mosaic art is practised. Sometimes a pattern is cut, in intaglio, in a solid block or slab of marble, and the cavities are filled up with a mosaic of small colored pieces; whereas in other specimens a thin veneer of mosaic is formed, and is then cemented upon a slab of inferior stone, or else is cemented down piece by piece, without being previously formed into a veneer. The Derbyshire mosaics produced, until recent years, were scarcely worthy of the name, being little more than a jumble of bits, placed side by side because they differed in color and shape, and imbedded in cement; but they now approach to the excellence of Florentine mosaic or *pietra dura*; and some of the works produced at Derty, Matlock, Buxton, Bakewell, and Castleton, are really beautiful. Chimney-pieces, table-tops, chess-boards, panels, caskets, and ornaments, are thus produced by a combination of British marbles in the natural state, stained marble, Sienna and other foreign marbles, malachite, aventurine, shells, and glass—forming a rich if not artistic kind of mosaic. There are not wanting, and are not likely to be wanting, those who can and will produce marble mosaics, if purchasers can and will pay for them. Three or four years ago a German artist, Herr Ganser, a pupil of the distinguished sculptor, Schwanthaler, exhibited in London a mosaic which must have called forth a vast amount of time and patience. It was about a yard in

length, and not much less in breadth. It represented the Gemini—Castor and Pollux—on horseback. The two naked youths were built up with little bits of marble, varying in tint to imitate the lights and shades of the nude figure, the whole having more or less a warm or reddish tinge; while the two gray horses were represented by numerous tints of gray and white marble.

Little bits of granite, of freestone, of limestone, and of such like building materials, would be out of place; we should as soon think of setting an elephant to dance on the tight-rope, as to make a mosaic picture of such bits. Yet, can we imagine that nouses, and terraces, and pavements, by a judicious combination of warm-tinted, and yellow-tinted, and blue-tinted stones, might have an effect given to them agreeable to the eye, without degenerating into meretricious tawdriness; all would depend on the taste with which this was done. Since the art of polishing granite has become better known and more practised, the dark varieties of this stone have been much used to give a pleasing contrast with stones of a lighter color.

Little bits of clay have been formed into mosaics, since the times of the Romans certainly—perhaps long before. We call such mosaics by the learned names of tessellated pavements and encaustic tiles. The red bits, at least in the Roman pavements, are clay; but the majority of the pieces are formed of stone or marble. The best and costliest pavements (such as that still existing at the Baths of Caracalla) were made of colored marbles of various kinds; but the inferior productions, such as those occasionally dug up into light in England and other parts of Europe, are usually made of such colored stones as happened to be found in the vicinity. As there is no easily obtained stone having so bright a red color as burned clay, it was usual to employ the last named material for this tint. In respect to the name, a *tessera* was a cubical piece of stone or other substance; a *tessela* was a smaller piece of the same shape; and thus a pavement of small cubical pieces came to be called a tessellated pavement. The pavement found at Woodchester, some years ago, had gray tessellæ of blue lias, dark brown of gritstone, light brown of hypiat limestone, and red of fine brick. The tessellæ, in the rougher specimens, had joints, ex-

hibiting gaping vacuities, which were filled up with cement.

When our pottery people, or (to be more respectful) our porcelain manufacturers, began to make clay pavements and slabs, they were puzzled to decide on the best combination of materials. One plan was to inlay tessellæ of stone with colored cement; another was to inlay tessellæ of terra-cotta (baked clay) with similar cements. But it was found that in such combinations the tessellæ and the cement were of unequal hardness, and that the pavement consequently wore away into holes. Another plan was to use tessellæ of cement colored with metallic oxides; and a fourth consisted in the substitution of bitumen for the cement. At length the experiments arrived at the method of employing clay in varying degrees of softness, and treated by very ingenious processes.

There are three methods, altogether different, now employed in producing these clay mosaics for pavements; we may call them the soft, the liquid, and the dry methods. In the soft method, clay of fine quality is colored in different tints; thin slabs are formed in each color; small cubes or other shaped pieces are cut from each slab, and the cubes are cemented, side by side, upon any required ground-work. The surface of such a mosaic would wear well, because the clay tessellæ, after baking, would have equal density. In the liquid method, the pavement is built up of square tiles, instead of small tessellæ, and each tile is made by a combination of liquid clay with soft clay. A model of the tile is first made in stiff clay, with the pattern cut out to the depth of a quarter of an inch; a mould is taken for this, having, of course, the pattern in relievo. Stiff colored clay (perhaps brown) is forced into this mould by means of a press, and there is thus produced a damp heavy square tile with a sunken pattern. To fill up this pattern, liquid clay is prepared (perhaps yellow) or clay with a honey-like consistence; this is filled into the cavities with a trowel or knife; and the tile, after being very slowly dried, is scraped level and clean at the surface, baked in a kiln, and glazed—making its final appearance as an ornamental highly-glazed brown and yellow tile, which may be combined with its brother tiles in the formation of a pavement. The tact required in this art is, to select such materials thus the liquid

clay shall shrink in drying just as much as the stiffer clay, and no more; this is essential to the production of a sound and level surface. The third or dry method is a very remarkable one. When flint and fine clay are reduced to powder, and thoroughly mixed, they may be brought into a solid form by intense pressure, without any softening or liquefying process. The ground materials are mixed with the requisite coloring substances—black, red, blue, yellow, green, and so forth—and are then forced into small steel moulds with such enormous force as to reduce the powder to one fourth of its former bulk. Thus is produced an intensely hard and durable solid cube—or it may have a triangular, or a hexagonal, or a rhomboidal surface. Having thus provided himself with an army of *teselæ*, little bits, the maker unites them into a slab by a substratum of cement, and lays this slab upon any prepared foundation.

THE PRESS IN ANCIENT ROME.

UNDER this somewhat paradoxical heading, the *Ausland*, one of the most prominent periodicals of Germany, publishes some notices which throw quite an unexpected light on several peculiar features of Roman life hitherto not sufficiently pointed out by the most sagacious writers on Roman antiquity. The matter is interesting enough, showing as it does that only as late as in the nineteenth century, modern civilization has, by the aid of steam and electricity, distanced in no great degree Roman civilization. The writer in the *Ausland* starts with the statement that in the time from Cicero up to Marcus Aurelius, scarcely less has been written and read than in our days. For this great extent of knowledge, he accounts by some peculiar domestic institutions of Rome, not to be met with in the later periods of European history. Certainly there was no copyright in Rome, in the meaning of modern law, but copyright existed as a matter of fact. Drawing off a single copy of a book would have proved far more expensive to an individual than it did to the publisher carrying on his trade on a large scale. Hence the multiplying of manuscripts was not performed by transcribing singly, but by simultaneously dictating to a large num-

ber of copyists. These copyists were slaves, and their labor was so exceedingly cheap as to supersede, in many respects, the work of machines. In extensive publishing establishments there was often dictation to several hundred slaves at once. This circumstance may, at the same time, account for the very numerous mistakes in manuscripts of those times, which originated not so much in the similarity of grammatical forms, but of association. There is one other point to be considered. The kind of letters used in books were, as regards shortness and conciseness, equally proportioned to common current hand, as are the modern types to usual handwriting. Very numerous short-hand abbreviations, sought in the public schools, were employed, by dint of which copyists by profession obtained almost an incredible degree of despatch and celerity. Martial tells us that the second book of his epigrams, which numbers some 650 verses, did not cost more than about one hour to the copyist. Should it be supposed that there were simultaneously dictated to but 300 copyists, more than 1,500 copies of that book could have been easily obtained in one day, which proves to be more than the printing press could afford but a century ago. True, the rapidity of book manufacturing was productive of great incorrectness, but slave labor being so exceedingly cheap, it greatly lowered the prices of literary productions. Martial's *Xenia*, which, if liberally printed, will fill two print-sheets, and if compressedly printed, but one sheet, would then cost twenty-five cents. Of this, Martial grievously complains; he thinks the bookseller could easily afford to sell the pamphlet at half this price, still doing a profitable business, and giving, thereby, his work a larger circulation. From some remarks of Martial, it may be gathered, with certainty, that authors received their regular fees from publishers. Wealthy statesmen, like Cicero, did not, as in our time, come in for a remuneration of their literary lucubrations. Authors of fame were constantly bored for manuscripts. The passion for novelties was as buoyant as in modern times. This caused the bulk of literature to increase at a very rapid rate, and the satirists of the day were rich in commenting on the mania for writing and reading, and it is mentioned by them that the cheesemongers were not the least among the customers of the publishers.

The bookstores and public libraries, connected with reading-rooms, were the rallying points and rendezvous of the *literati*. From Publius Victorinus, we learn that during the second and third century after Christ, there were in Rome alone, twenty-nine public libraries, many of which, as to the number of books, equalled the celebrated Alexandrian Library, which is supposed to have contained 700,000 volumes. From this, the extent of literature and want for reading may be easily concluded. In the writings of the architect Vitruvius, we see it stated that every Roman, possessed of moderate means, had his separate library room in his house, and that a great many private libraries contained from twenty to thirty thousand volumes.

THE ABOLISHMENT OF THE CAPITOL ART-COMMISSION.

CONGRESS, at its last session, abolished the Art-Commission. Shocked at the monstrosities of the "decorations" of the Capitol, ordered by Capt. Meigs, the previous session took the authority to decorate from the hands of the civil engineer, and committed it to a commission of three artists. These proceeded to work early last summer, and voted as *outré* most of the ornamentation which glared upon the visiter from every imaginable wall and ceiling in the national building. They found fault with ogres, and naiads, and dryads, and heathen deities, and Old World celebrities, which the foreigners, employed by Capt. Meigs, had palleted upon the walls, in shapes, and sizes, and predicaments, to make the very dome shake with laughter; while the "American Events," attempted to be painted upon wall and panel, were so unmistakably foreigners' results, that the Commission had not even patriotism enough to perceive merit in them. Hence they reported to their countrymen a plan for undoing the work of the cheap Italians and Frenchmen (they "decorated" by the square yard, we believe,) and the country felt relieved at the report and prospect, even though the design was to undo what had been done at the expense of tens of thousands of dollars.

But, the art-wisdom of our National Congress evidently felt ill at ease that three *mere artists* should propose such